



FILE 77C

September 1991



FILE 770:89

File 770 the elusive newzine edited by Mike Glycer at 5828 Woodman Ave. #2, Van Nuys CA 91401. Let's get this Worldcon report published before we're lapped by the calendar!

File 770 is available for news, artwork, arranged trades or by subscriptions. Subscriptions cost \$8.00 for 5 issues, mailed first class in North America or surface mail rates overseas. Air printed matter delivery is available for \$2.50 per issue. Buzz the editor with

news at (818) 787-5061. E-mail can be sent to CompuServe #72557,1334, or to Lynzie's Motherboard #798 (the number for Lynzie's is 213-650-0519.)

THINGS TO COME: There's an issue full of news and convention reports trying to escape this computer. And perhaps a photo of the editor writing 100 times on a chalkboard, "I will never edit convention publications again!"

NOREASCON 3 MEMORY BOOK: The Noreascon 3 Memory Book is back from the printer in time for Chicon. The 64-page book includes 16 pages of color photographs and another 16 pages of black and white photographs. Edited by Laurie Mann, the book includes writing by Mark Olson, Steve Boehm, Kurt Siegel and Joe Ross, and art by Merle Insinga and Joe Mayhew. The photographs are primarily the work of the Noreascon 3 Photography Team, with additional photographs by Rick Katze and Aron Insinga.

The books are being distributed at no charge to people who had full (either supporting or attending) memberships in Noreascon 3. An initial bulk mailing of 550 was completed on August 8. The committee will have enough copies of the Memory Book at Chicon to distribute them to foreign fans attending Chicon.

Boston fans are also in the process of distributing ConFiction Program Books to American fans who were ConFiction members but did not attend. They will have copies of the book to distribute at Chicon.

ART CREDITS

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ARRIVAL IN HOLLAND: One block from the house where Anne Frank's family hid from Nazi persecution stands another old house that in its passage from the 19th century to the present has been spared permanent linkage with horrific memories. The Canal House is a bed-and-breakfast where tourists are welcomed into rooms furnished as they were in grandmother's day. Knowing that the comfortable memories such furnishings evoke have been posed, like the families dressed up to be photographed for the sepia pictures on the walls, makes the place no less soothing to travelers jarred by transatlantic flights and a clock turned upside-down.

Rick Foss, my travel agent, had booked me into the Canal House. As good luck would have it I returned from a morning visiting the Rembrandts in the Rijksmuseum at the same time Rick and Jace Foss, Joe and Gay Haldeman and Rusty Hevelin rode up on their bicycles. They had toured Holland on bike, and as Rick explained, when you think of Holland's flat terrain you think "Ah! Easy Bicycling!" -- but nobody remembers to mention the stiff winds that work bikers just as hard as pumping uphill.

Squeaking behind me on little black wheels was my own traveling handicap, the 79-pound black suitcase full of supplies for the LA in '96 bidding party. I felt like a cross between Harold Lloyd and Steve Reeves, pulled back down escalators by the rolling deadweight, then heaving it up and through narrow passenger car vestibules while boarding a train. What contraband were we smuggling into Holland? Ten pounds of Oreos and 20 pounds of M&M's...

With Rick and Jace Foss I rode the train from Amsterdam to Den Haag on Wednesday. It was remarkable to listen to the ticket clerk handling three consecutive customers' purchases in three different languages. At the end of the ride we learned an irony about travel in

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CONFICTION

1990 Worldcon
report by
MIKE GLYER

Holland, that the cab fare from the train station to the Bel Air Hotel cost twice as much as the train ticket.

The hotel was a few hundred feet from the Congress Center, Steven and Sue Francis, Scott and Jane Dennis and Ben Yalow were checking in when I joined the line.

Americans who stayed at the Brighton Metropole in 1987 were comparatively satisfied by the Bel Air's efficient staff. Gary R. Robe said in Summa Nulla 1: "I remembered the snooty, overbooked Metropole Hotel from Brighton three years ago which gleefully lost confirmed reservations. The Bel Air Hotel was about as sterile as the lunar surface but the front desk staff was very friendly, and my reservation was bang on the money."

The accommodations were Spartan compared to the average Worldcon hotel. My roommate, Gary Louie, sent me up to investigate why they had "assigned us a room with only one bed." It was actually two postage-stamp-sized beds pushed together under a single quilt. With jet-lag I was grateful to drop into a bed of any size for a few hours' sleep.

BEGGARS AND BURGERS: ConFiction started on Thursday, August 22. Fans devoured breakfast in the hotel restaurant, a nice buffet full of eggs, cereal, baked goods, cheese and cold cuts, bacon: just about everything people shouldn't eat at

breakfast but really want to.

In the Bel Air lobby Steve Francis waited for all the Louisville committee to gather, including Dick Spelman. Bidding farewell to his book business, now operated by Larry Smith, Spelman said he had sold 700 copies of Bimbos of the Death Star at conventions, making it his all-time bestseller. Added Mary Southworth about ##BIMBO'S## author, "And she still won't talk to him." Spelman sneered, "But she does talk to Bill Trojan [another dealer]," pronouncing a judgment on all involved.

All this talk of bookselling was overheard by young, longhaired Eric Marlin. In improvised medieval garb he crossed the lobby to ask, "Do you know a good place to beg?" Having softened us up, he made his real pitch, to buy his self-published book of poetry.

OPENING CEREMONIES: The Prince William Alexander auditorium can hold over 800 people and at ConFiction's opening ceremonies nearly every seat was taken. The trumpet fanfare of Aaron Copeland's "Theme for the Coming Man", was followed by Strauss' "Blue Danube." Mascot of last year's Noreascon 3, Alice in Wonderland, skipped into view with ConFiction's Space Mouse. They spoke and gestured inaudibly because the sound system did not amplify their lines.

Worldcon chairman Kees Van Toorn came on stage wearing a dinner jacket and black bow tie. It seemed an echo of the "Ben Yalow Day" also celebrated Thursday by Operations, who were all wearing black bow-ties.

Kees planned to start with a memoriam for the science fiction personalities who passed away during the year but the sound or slides were still not working. Ordinarily such technical

problems bring convention programs to a halt but they never seriously impaired ConFiction's ceremonies because these fans improvised a way to go on without effects.

Kees Van Toorn remarked that the Dutch committee had been together five years. He warned "even wooden shoes can wear out" and shared his comic nightmare that ranks of dignitaries and fans would be lined up impatiently at the Congress Centre with everyone wondering "WHO the hell has the key to the front door!"

Van Toorn added, "I must admit that after five years of hard work, the pain, the misery, the elation and the joy of delivering a World Science Fiction Convention you're bound to feel a bit crazy, but we must also remember the saying of Lao-tse: 'Craziness is one of the seven doors into the Pearly Gates of Heaven.'"

Further introductions were made by Master of Ceremonies, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro. Her attempt to pay a humorous homage to the international membership of ConFiction came out, "I can't think of a place in the world where you can escape from fandom." In hindsight this brick was typical of her performance.

The auditorium's stage machinery was used to good effect introducing the guests of honor. With spotlights turned low and the curtains at the rear of the stage reflecting an indirect purple glow, the baroque organ score of "Rollerball" sliced through the twilight and the four guests of honor rose into view on a stage elevator -- Harry Harrison, Joe Haldeman, Wolfgang Jeschke and Andrew Porter.

When they had taken seats on stage, Minister of Culture for The Netherlands D'Ancona officially

welcomed convention members, saying, "I must get used to sharing the platform with Space Mouse and Alice in Wonderland." D'Ancona stressed that "the Netherlands is a sanctuary of different cultures," a liberality that extended to science fiction, if not to Perry Rhodan, which she said ironically is "not quite included as literature." Joe Haldeman put his hand on Kees' shoulder and Kees lowered his head in mock disappointment.

D'Ancona's peroration began, "and when people hear that the Minister of Culture has opened the science fiction convention --" and (for me at least) finished with the nearby whisper of Rick Foss, "-- they reach for their revolvers."

Fans respond ambivalently to government officials appearing at Worldcons, a little flattered by the attention yet very uncomfortable with it. Fandom still wonders how the Minister of Police, Emergency Service and the Arts came to open the Melbourne Worldcon in 1985 even though Race Matthews had once been a leading Australian sf fan.

At the end of the ceremonies Space Mouse distributed bouquets to D'Ancona and other guests and Van Toorn sent us on our way, announcing the first hour's programs.

CONFICITION ATTENDANCE: The daily newzine reported that when the registration desk closed Sunday, August 26, there were 3,029 members of all types. The convention had 2,399 full attending members. The convention sold 652 day memberships, and an additional 400 fans attended the Perry Rhodan event.

National contingents included 709 from Great Britain, 556 from the U.S., 360 from The Netherlands, 92

from Finland, 41 from Poland, 33 from East Germany, 10 from Czechoslovakia, 6 from Russia, and a sprinkling from most other European countries and Israel. Total membership of all types, including non-attending, was over 4,000.

Almost half of the U.S. fans with attending memberships did not come to ConFiction. Later in the convention Rick Katze blamed a recent wave of unemployment for the unexpectedly low turnout of Boston fans. The usual agitators from Britain tried to find significance in the smaller American presence at ConFiction: more than likely the same ones who complained there were "too many Yanks" at Brighton.

PROGRAMME OOPS: To assure at least one thing would go absolutely right in the program operations room, Amy Thomson came in Thursday and announced to us she had married. Amy said her wedding vows included the pledge "To love, honor, cherish, and see Akira Kurosawa movies," while her husband pledged to "occasionally go to a science fiction convention."

Despite Amy's good start, other problems arose. In a corner of the room Ben Yalow and Saul Jaffe fussed over their computer and laser printer, installing the convention programming software previously used by NOLAcon II and Noreascon 3. Jo Thomas, program director, stood by to see the results. But the laser printer pitched a fit, forcing huge reports to be reproduced on an infinitely slower dot-matrix printer.

Comic relief was provided by a self-important trio who strode in to inspect the room. "We're Security," announced the dumpy boy in mirrorshades, wearing a camouflage vest. A girl posed beside him in a

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leopard-print body stocking, top hat and black frock coat. Silently glowering behind her was a tall guy in a lavender t-shirt carrying a crackling walkie-talkie. Made me feel immediately more secure...that there would be jokes for my con report. Determining that Programme Oops was safe against anything within their ability to ward off, like drunken tardis drivers and underage Daleks, they left. When the coast was clear, Arthur Cruttenden came in from the Green Room and dubbed the trio "The KeesToorn Kops." Everyone agreed Security should peacebond their radios, that is, be forced to use earphones.

Jo Thomas gave ConFiction programming its backbone. A grade-school math teacher and a family man, he responded to the pressure of handling an extensive program with discipline and self-effacing humor. He did an admirable job. Like all the Dutch fans he spared no effort to make a success of every aspect of the con he came into contact with, whether it was creating the grand scheme of the program, handling a role on stage, or providing the calligraphy for a menu-parody devised by John Brunner.

Jo (pronounced "yo") began organizing his program in earnest nearly two years beforehand. He was omnipresent at Noreascon 3 interviewing convention runners about everything from panel ideas and event scheduling to selecting topics that show pros to their best advantage. Jo also learned the secret history of clashing personalities that Winchell used to call "don't-invite-'ems" -- individuals who can't (and won't!) be scheduled on the same panel.

Working with pros worldwide, Jo Thomas and his collaborator Theo Hanou shaped an ambitious program intended to retain for British and

American fans the familiar atmosphere of worldcons, while offering whole tracks of thematic programming highlighting Dutch and European science fiction.

For example, Holland's national science fiction club, Nederlands Contactcentrum voor Science Fiction (NCSF), designated Sunday as the "Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Dutch Fandom." NCSF president Theo Hanou led ceremonies that included remarks by Forrest J Ackerman, Brian Aldiss and Frederik Pohl, as well as prominent Dutch fans Annemarie van Ewyck, Jo Thomas, Leo Kindt and Johan-Martijn-Flaton. It was Ackerman's visit to Amsterdam after the London worldcon that catalyzed formation of the national club on August 11, 1965.

Sunday's program also featured the "Retrospective of 25 Years of Perry Rhodan." ConFiction sold nearly 400 special one-day admissions for this series of programs. The Perry Rhodan space operas originated and enjoyed their greatest popularity in Europe. The series was also published in America for a time during the 1970s, translated by Wendayne Ackerman. Perry Rhodan continues to be supported by an affectionate readership: issue #1000 in the Dutch series was available at ConFiction. Rhodan panels included, "The Esthetics of Diagrams of Rhodan Space Ships" and "Rhodan Around the World."

Sometimes the panelists' names were startlingly unfamiliar. Rick Foss thought the panelists for "Fans and Groups of Perry Rhodan" including Frick, Gaag and Barg, "sounded like the noises after 15 beers."

Thomas and Hanou took full advantage of ConFiction's unusual opportunity to offer panels of science fiction writers, editors and fans

representing France, Belgium, Australia, China, Spain, Bulgaria, and other countries and languages: even "The Stainless Steel Rat Speaks Esperanto" with guest of honor Harry Harrison.

Coming with the exciting opportunity to have speakers who could never afford to attend a U.S. Worldcon was the inevitable handicap of working long-distance with American writers who are normally fixtures on the Worldcon program but had wavering plans (or no plan at all) to come to Holland.

Considering the greater time needed for correspondence to filter through international postal systems, and that American pros coming to Holland were likely to depart extra-early and vacation in Europe beforehand, final letters and schedules needed to go out in July. Unfortunately, Thomas and Hanou said, computer problems delayed mailing program participants' final schedules until the first week in August. Tardy correspondence frustrated the writers. Other errors resulted in scheduling speakers who never planned to attend the convention, such as Raymond Feist and game publisher Steve Jackson.

After the convention Feist commented, "I joined as a supporting member. I never converted to attending, yet they got it in their heads I was coming. I can't figure why." Ironically, ConFiction's media liaison reported that Raymond Feist was the writer most sought after for interviews.

HEROES OF POPULAR CULTURE: Some of the volunteers I met who helped make a success of ConFiction (and stand for many more I didn't meet who did valuable work), included Americans Sara Paul and Rick Foss in Ooops, and British fans Tim Illingworth, Chris

O'Shea and Martin Hoare in other departments. Logistics was staffed by British fans who performed remarkable feats even when handed last-minute changes and unexpected needs.

PROGRAMMING IS WHERE YOU FIND IT:

The only commandment ConFiction's pocket program didn't violate is that it really could fit in a pocket. Once you took it out of your pocket, the mischief began.

ConFiction scheduled events in fourteen function rooms and ran two tracks of film and special events. Whoever designed the pocket program set up two grids of eight tracks each, running the complete Thursday-Monday schedule of the one-half the program before beginning the second half. Some people went two days before discovering they had been missing half the program.

The design of individual pages was equally troublesome. Time and title information had been needlessly compressed within each column so that starting times in different rooms were not parallel. Attendees could not compare at a glance items with the same starting time. The daily newzine staff rescued people from further confusion by publishing a daily event grid for Saturday and Sunday.

EAST TAKES YOU OUT, IN TAKES YOU WEST: Even good diagrams cannot substitute for the experience of walking through a Worldcon facility. Every fan must eventually solve the puzzle of navigating in a large, unfamiliar convention hall. Even so, finding directions in the Congressgebouw reminded me of Niven's rhyme for navigating in The Smoke Ring.

On ConFiction's first day, Thursday, I was assigned to a program in the

Upper Rembrandt Terrace, "The Remarkable Mr. Andrew Porter." I scaled several flights of stairs and found the Rembrandt Lounge, set aside as a faannish bar like Brighton's Fan Lounge. Yet there was no signage for the Terrace. By luck I encountered Fran Skene who had just finished a program in the same alcove, "The History of Western Fandom," lightly attended because people were still blazing a trail to the high reaches of the Congresgebouw.

The "Remarkable" series introduced ConFiction's guests of honor to attendees by a dialogue between the guest's friends and acquaintances. "The Remarkable Herr Wolfgang Jeschke" called on Ronald Hahn, Thomas Loock, and Uwe Luserke; "The Remarkable Mr. H. Harrison" boasted Dr. Leon E. Stover, Sam J. Lundwall and Bruce McAllister.

To extol the virtues of "The Remarkable Mr. Andrew Porter," the pocket program listed me, and only me: a slight problem since I don't know an hour's worth of stories about Andy. In fact hardly any, since I couldn't repeat Dana Siegel's stories about the noise complaints Andy phoned from "Bob Heinlein's room" at some long-ago Confusion; not at a con where Porter was guest of honor!

Later on I found out that was really the plan, but at first glance I jumped to the conclusion they wanted me to interview Porter, so I collected him, then to make sure I didn't run out of questions, I deputized Jay Kay Klein and J. R. Madden as panelists.

That was only one part of a marathon day. Even while seconding Jo Thomas' efforts in "Programme Ooops" to field questions and problems with the schedule, I recruited fans for the Porter panel and devised interview

questions for the evening's reprise of "SF Tonight." At Noreascon 3 I played Ed McMahon to Tappan King's Johnny Carson, but at ConFiction I was on my own.

"Talkshow", as ConFiction called it, was our "public-access version of the Tonight Show," designed to introduce the English-speaking guests Harry Harrison, Joe Haldeman and Toastmaster Chelsea Quinn Yarbro on the first night of the con.

Barry and Lee Gold, from LA, and Sue Mason, from England, provided the introductory fanfare, and filksongs between guests. Barry closed by playing his guitar and singing Roberta Rogow's touching "Science Fiction" to the tune of "Both Sides Now," which sentimentally describes science fiction fans' tenacious hold on the sense of wonder.

If little new ground was broken, the pros showed their wit and insight to a new audience. Asked to comment about all the languages in use at the convention, Harry Harrison said, "I speak Esperanto like a native!" Chelsea Quinn Yarbro noted the distinction between terror and horror: With terror, you know what it is that's scaring you; with horror, you don't know what it is that's attacking you, just that you're going to die.

OH BRAVE NEW WORLDS WRITERS: The rare chance to meet favorite writers wasn't a one-way transatlantic opportunity, either. Although a reader of Ian Watson's novels for 20 years, I never knew he was such a character; to me, he was one of the most entertaining figures at ConFiction.

Walking into Programming early Friday morning to see if anything worthwhile was in the fridge, Watson said he'd

spent last evening as "door dragon" of the SFWA suite. He said the pros drank the place dry on the first night, and no wonder: he confronted one member who wanted to come in with six friends. Watson said he was distracted from these duties when a Romanian publisher walked up and asked to buy one of his books. As they discussed the technicalities of frozen currencies, another writer tried to barge in whom Watson told to go away. The writer mocked, "First you get the agents drunk, then you steal their work!"

Watson donned his "game face" for his first panel on Friday, having agreed to uphold alone the unpopular end of the "I Hate SF/I Love SF" debate. From the beginning Watson's opponents realized they had been cleverly outmaneuvered, as he disingenuously complained about the proliferation of modern science fiction and fondly declared, "SF -- it has to be stopped. It's an ecological catastrophe of the imagination!"

On the other side George R. R. Martin wryly inquired, "So I suppose the position for us to take is that we love SF because it's so bad?" Apparently so, for George continued, "Unlike Ian, I'm not overwhelmed by the excellence." In Martin's opinion, anyone who compared the Hugo-winning novels from the award's first 10 years with the winners from its last 10 ten years could see the latter "were the most popular and successful books but not necessarily the most accomplished or ambitious books of their year."

M. John Harrison followed with a Timothy-Learyesque rap that Aristotle was into peak experiences -- Aristotle said that if it gets you out of your head, it can't be bad. "Science fiction provides us with peak experiences," Harrison said,

"and as Aristotle also said, dope is better than SF, but if SF is what you can get, stick it in your head."

GIVING FITS: Which programs will fill up an auditorium and which will draw smaller audiences? American worldcons find the game of matching program items to function rooms challenges their memories and predictive powers. Imagine how much greater the challenge was for Jo Thomas and Theo Hanou as they tried to anticipate the audience-drawing powers of big-name authors from overseas versus once-in-a-lifetime panels of international writers or events tailored to the popular tastes of Dutch fans.

Some guesses inevitably went amiss. Jo Thomas preferred to assign function space based on his opinion of the importance of the topic under discussion. Sometimes the result was to present a subject like "Electronical Futures" discussed by Eileen Gunn and Dr. Elizabeth Hull in the largely-empty 800-seat auditorium while 200 sweaty people sat, stood or squatted in the 150-seat Mariszaal conference room to hear Poul Anderson, Hal Clement, Jack Chalker and Larry Niven discuss "Unsuccessful Predictions."

Thomas' plans often were exactly right, contrary to expectations. "Where Will the Dutch Emigrate to When the Water Rises," a humorous panel moderated by Thomas with Harry Harrison, Jo Fletcher and myself, was set in the 800-seat auditorium opposite Dave Langford's "Fun With Senseless Violence" in the 250-seat Rembrandtzaal. The panel started with a good house and thanks to staggered starting times it inherited Langford's large audience when he was done.

I saw Dave afterward, and we talked

about his occasional issues of Cloud Chamber. Remembering my barb about Ansible's infrequency when it won its last Hugo, he said, "I think an annual schedule is about right, don't you?" Well, now that you mention it, Dave...

IN WITH THE GOOD AIR: Sometimes unexpected things popped up literally. One afternoon kids program organizers inflated a 10-foot-tall, red-white-and-blue plastic castle at a back door of the Congress Centre for use as a trampoline.

FAN GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH:

A highlight of Friday's fannish track was Andrew Porter's Fan GoH speech. About 50 listened from seats at bistro-style tables in the Rembrandtzaal.

Neither magazine editing nor gossip about the SF marketplace occupied much of his speech, rather he devoted it to his greatest loves and concerns. Andy described his fascination with drawing cities of his own invention, how insights gained during visits to unfamiliar places like Oxford crop up in his drawings. A braiding of ideas brought his speech 'round to the idea of how the Netherlands might be spared inundation caused by global warming through the use of genetically altered seaweed patrolled by mutated otters, or by holding back the water with tractor beams.

In time, these flights of imagination gave way to a fan guest of honor's more typical fare. Whether delivered by Ted White, Dave Kyle or Andrew Porter, the fan GoH speech has become a stodgy recitation of how fandom has deteriorated since the speaker joined it because fanzine fandom has declined in importance; there are expanding numbers of tv-generation fans who expect to be entertained;

and while trufandom grows gray and withered, fandom in general has expanded to a size where it cannot avoid tragic encounters with the IRS, FBI, etc. By the time any of these guests of honor reached his conclusion you wanted to jump off the nearest bridge.

Isn't there a single one of these guys who is glad he became a fan and thinks newcomers to fandom can find enjoyment here, too? The annual requiem for fandom is both tedious and untrue.

TEMPESTS, WITH AND WITHOUT TEAPOTS:

The "dean of science fiction writers" having passed away with surprisingly little notice from con programming in America, mainly because his closest colleagues resisted talking about Heinlein publicly, Peter Weston's contrived "Heinlein - Pompous and Long Winded?" predictably failed to rouse anyone's ire.

On the other hand, fans looked forward to seeing Weston's slide show "An Illustrated Tour Through SF History." It was a chronicle of the pulp origins of science fiction illustrated by magazine covers. When the first slides came up reversed Weston rescued the moment, saying, "There is always some problem in these kinds of programs. What usually happens at British conventions is they ask, 'Does anybody in the audience have a slide projector?'"

Peter tried to court controversy during his second program, too. He commented that Jules Verne's fantasies had a rational framework, "but of course we know he got it all wrong. By comparison H.G. Wells was a much greater influence. He was more of a writer." Weston paused a beat to see if any French fans in the audience were paying attention, but there was not a peep.

When it was discovered just an hour beforehand that Algis Budrys accidentally had been scheduled to interview himself...Rick Foss stepped in, had a quick conversation with Budrys in the Programme Oops room, and assured the show would go on. He asked about AJ's editorial job at Playboy, and Budrys remembered Hugh Hefner's remarkable memory and how checking one issue Hefner detected the wrong artwork had been use and called for the right piece from a specific file drawer, "fifteen illustrations back."

Elsewhere at ConFiction writers and scholars reprised successful program items from regional conventions. Robert Forward talked about "Interstellar Flight" and Peter Nicholls reported his progress in updating the Encyclopedia of Science Fiction.

THE MISS-THE-PROS FUNCTION: In almost 20 years no Worldcon has surpassed the meet-the-pros reception of TorCon 2 (1973), where SFWA members wore plastic skimmers and milled about with the fans until called to the microphone for an introduction by Jerry Pournelle. The TorCon committee designed its reception to address what they assumed was wrong with such events, that many did not recognize even well-known writers on sight. SFWA members gamely submitted themselves to the experiment. The 1973 experience cast an imperceptible shadow over all meet-the-pros to follow as people gradually began to suspect the truth: that the pros did not ~~##want##~~ to be recognized (read: victimized) by fans, and the fans did not ~~##want##~~ to be forced to admit they had never read or even heard of many of the working professionals in the genre.

In 1989 the Noreascon 3 committee was still trying to devise a way to

overcome the psychological and logistical barriers to making a meet-the-pros work. Consciously or not, recent committees have kept the name but abandoned the event, thus, the Noreascon 3 "birthday party" and at ConFiction, the Rijstafel.

Rijstafel is a traditional Dutch meal consisting of various spicy dishes inspired by the cuisine of Indonesia. Kees Van Toorn conceived of a relaxed meal, with pros seated among the fans, allowing both to meet in a more personal way. General introductions would follow the meal. Tickets to the Friday night feast were sold for 25 guilders, with a limit of about 800. The food was pretty good, but no arrangement having been made to assure the kind of mixing Kees had in mind, what actually happened was that people who knew each other naturally sat together, fans with fans and writers with writers. As Sara Paul summarized, "It was supposed to be a meet-the-pros, but the pros ate and left."

GUEST OF HONOR WOLFGANG JESCHKE:

Before Jeschke's speech Martin Tudor went through the big auditorium littering every seat with a Critical Wave advert. Hm, intrusive advertising -- did he learn this from New Era in 1987? Also reminiscent of Brighton was the shockingly poor attendance at a European GoH's program item: only 50 fans were in the hall when he began.

German pro Wolfgang Jeschke launched into a complex, philosophical discussion of the millennium. Unlike past generations who assumed the year 2000 would open an era of great opportunity, Jeschke felt it was a threefold "point of no return" forcing our generation to choose to lift-off or crash. He said the current era marked: (1) the end of natural evolution, (2) the expiration

of the time period when ##homo sapiens## can travel to space, and (3) the collapse of existing Socialist governments.

He said that in Germany over the past two years, Cyberpunk has, where The Dispossessed, Dune, and Foundation have not, caused SF to exert a wider interest than usual in the media. Cyberpunk aroused only moderate interest in German science fiction fans but it had mass popularity, a popularity which had nothing to do with improvement in the translations; in fact, cyberpunk is more difficult to translate.

He described cyberpunk as offering "dreams of the spotless arcs up there in orbit around L5 with clean air, good water and people with pure hearts," orbiting the decayed earth below which teemed with "riff-raff of powerful kinetic origin." While Jeschke thinks such a vision is "cynical, bizarre", whether or not it ever comes into being, he wondered where the German enthusiasm for cyberpunk came from.

Jeschke said it comes from outside the usual SF readership. Cyberpunk opens the space behind the monitor. It promises a new form of existence without the limitations of the physical body, and the possibility of transcendence. But even that is not enough: cyberpunk has touched on something new (not yet plumbed to its depths) -- genetics, the making of designer creations, whether vegetable or animal. The reality treading on the heels of these dreams will bring about the end of natural evolution.

The text of Jeschke's speech has already appeared in a semipro newzine should this account of its first of three points make you curious to see what he wrote about the other two. I felt he generously shared his

imaginative gifts with the audience. In spoken form the text ran 65 minutes. Some jaded fans dismissed the speech as verbose, an unjustified verdict most likely motivated by the slight delay imposed on the start of Bob Shaw's "Serious Scientific Talk."

BOB SHAW: Proving that everything is relative, I was more surprised there were any empty seats in the auditorium than impressed with Shaw's drawing power following Jeschke's sparse audience. At Brighton the Shaw speech drew 900 fans, standing room only.

Shaw threatened to deliver a paper about "corn circles" titled, "Corn Is The Lowest Form of Wheat." Meanwhile he fiddled with his glasses and admitted, "I didn't expect to have trouble with these lenses. I paid a lot of money to a man well-known in the optics field. I only went to him because he said he'd done a lot of work on the Hubble telescope."

Instead of the corn circles lecture, Shaw confided about his "Truth Machine." It uses a contrasting principle to that used by the lie detector. It's devastatingly simple, explained Shaw. "For all I know, my mind might be more simple and childlike than Einstein's. For with my truth machine I stood the idea of the lie detector on its head. If you have to sweat to tell a lie, when one cannot sweat, it's impossible to tell a lie. My truth machine simply squirts a highly effective antiperspirant..."

The audience laughed knowingly. "There are some people in the science fiction world who claim I use the same jokes over and over," said Shaw in mock outrage. He had an excuse. "Sometimes the brain is not always functioning its best after a breakfast of half a dozen Guinness

sunrises... That's a little Irish drink. It's not that the sun is rising, it's that you're going down."

THE RANQUET: Elst Weinstein presided over the Ranquet just outside the Congressgebouw food concession. Listening to him were Ranquet veterans like the Bushyagers, Matthew Tepper, David Schlosser and Dick and Nicki Lynch. There was also a sprinkling of Brits new to the experience: I had to translate the slang term "turkey" for Jim Walker. There were two Finns, as Australian, and a fellow named John Fast who did a remarkable Brian Burley imitation by trying to buy up the Hugu Awards to insult his enemies.

JOE HALDEMAN GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH: Haldeman concluded his speech by thanking a long list of people who influenced and supported his life and career beginning with "my agent, who lifted from my shoulders the burden of whining at editors for more money."

He thanked fans not merely for their buying his books but for the real emotional support he felt they gave him as a returning Vietnam veteran. Haldeman recalled that some Vietnam vets survived the trauma of war but could not survive the trauma of the hostility and indifference they found at home; over 60,000 of his fellow vets killed themselves. But Haldeman came home to fandom, most of whom were against the war but in 20 years not a single one has ever criticized him for being a soldier. Instead, said Joe, "We battle over things like whether bare breasts should be outlawed in costume competitions, or whether Trekkers should be allowed to breathe the same air molecules as those who read the stuff."

ALIEN OBJECTS AND OBJECTIONABLE ALIENS: If you hold a black, Mark

Twainian view of life then it comes as no surprise to hear that the best-known humorist at ConFiction furnished one of its few genuinely unfriendly moments.

Terry Pratchett, a British writer, told listeners in the Green Room that he had been asked to appear at the International School in the Hague, whose student body is half Americans and half persons from other countries. Pratchett said he was surprised the teacher asked for somebody besides an American, "with Niven and others floating around." He added, "You know how the Americans take care of their own."

This was the kind of unwelcoming snideness habitual at Brighton. After spending the whole con with Dutch fans I had been lulled into thinking politeness and mutual respect was normal.

He told the story as we were sipping Dutch beer in the Green Room, waiting to be escorted to the "Alien Objects" panel, a kind of scientifictional "Liars Club" moderated by Annemarie Van Ewyck.

Annemarie Van Ewyck had accumulated some assorted widgets and doodads and presented them to our panel of far-future "Alien archeologists who are met together to decide what these artifacts were for."

For example, handed the crank from an ice-cream-maker, Diane Duane explained, "This is the robocircumciser we've heard so much about."

A candle snuffer was identified as, "military headgear for dwarves." When Annemarie passed a Holland in '90 button down the line someone recognized it as a time-traveling heliograph sending the message, "Save

my ass!" Other devices were described as "an oxymoron detector" and "a Barsoomian army knife."

The audience had a good laugh, and Annemarie showed that humorists are best used on programs that challenge them to feats of wit and wordplay, not in the cliché programs that lamely assign them to discuss humor in sf.

ANNEMARIE VAN EWYK: At ConFiction, Anne Marie van Ewyck, who wrote the series about Dutch sf and fandom completed in File 770:86, handled the fannish programming and, more than that, took up the slack for an extremely wide spectrum of critical tasks. She did a tremendous job. Her infinite adaptability to the many roles she handled at the con was symbolized in her range of attire: sometimes heading for a late night staff meeting smoking a cheroot, wisps of hair straggling down her forehead, or in mid-afternoon coolly moderating a panel in Aubrey Beardsley black-and-white office wear.

Anyone else would have found it maddening to handle such torrent of demands for instant, creative solutions. An American fan who packed his copy of NESFA's role-playing game "If I Ran The Con" came to Program Oops wanting to organize a session. He was directed to Annemarie and in the very next daily newzine his game was scheduled and publicized, including the necessary three team captains; players were invited to turn out.

More bizarre challenges may have been the rule rather than the exception, as when Annemarie got to deal with the West German fans who organized the "Lump-A-Cheese" game, posting announcements all over the Congress Centre, and commandeering its central

staircase for a playing field. Annemarie's philosophy seemed to be: whatever innocent fun fans wanted to improvise, the committee was there to help them succeed. In this case we had no idea what happened in the "Lump-A-Cheese" game until some participants came around asking for a length of flat board for use as a catapult. We still didn't know anything about the game, but it sounded like an SCA food fight.

Of all the events under her wing Annemarie most favored the Charades Marathon. Back in one of the lounges they began playing charades on Saturday afternoon. A paper banner was draped over a restraining rail above the central staircase advertising the consecutive hours they had been playing. At the end of each hour some obstreperous loon with a horn would blatt loudly off-key and declaim how long the marathon had endured. When my path crossed Anne Marie's at the LA in '96 party late Saturday night and I asked about the marathon she smiled with unusual warmth that it had been going 10 hours. They played late into the night.

PARTIES: It was very difficult to have good parties in the Congresgebouw, particularly bid parties intended to attract large crowds. All supplies had to be purchased from the convention center at predictably steep prices, so there was less to eat and drink. Making the utilitarian program rooms decorative and lively was difficult. Standard bid party paraphernalia had been culled down to what a committee could physically carry in its baggage -- and expect to take through customs tariff-free. Party-throwers generally got the function rooms late, and were forced to stand in the halls waiting for evening programs to empty out, leaving having little time to

decorate.

For example, on Thursday night the ConFrancisco bidders were promised a function room for a party but they were unable to set up until a 9 PM panel cleared out. Since the program featured Ramsey Campbell, Cherry Wilder and others speaking about horror fiction, it had attracted 75 intensely interested listeners. Sasha Miller and Kees Van Toorn were equally exasperated by the timing.

Also, the very concept of an open bidding party was a novelty to many European fans. Some bidders complained that the locusts immediately ate up all the refreshments.

Gary R. Robe, a Louisville in '94 party host, wrote in Summa Nulla 1, "[A big] problem with the parties was that the Europeans just couldn't handle an open party with free refreshments. In Europe there is no such thing as free anything. For some of these folks it was the first time in their lives that they had been offered free food and drink without limits. The upshot of this was that a herd of fans would descend on the room as soon as it opened and consume the supplies like a flock of locusts. Most American fans know that the money for the party supplies is coming out of somebody's pocket and go easy. At ConFiction these huge blowouts cost upwards of \$500 a night and most of the money went for feeding and liquoring the horde. On top of this the Congressgebouw had no air conditioning, so as soon as the first 100 or so partygoers crammed into the room, the temperature rose above ninety-five degrees and stayed that way. ...This gave all the parties the atmosphere of a subway station at rush hour."

Hawaii in '94 boasted the wildest

party. Lex Nakashima and company served an ocean of Dutch liquor. Lex smiled guilelessly, "I just bought what Kees told me to buy!" The committee overcame the limitations of the room, dimming the lights for atmosphere and crowding the ceiling with yellow, helium-filled balloons imprinted with the bid logo. These migrated -- as hoped -- to every other bidding party in the centre. The sweltering crowd inside the Hawaii party prompted Gary Louie's to comment, "It's the first time I've ever seen condensation on the inside of a meeting room!"

Gary also told every passerby that Takumi Shibano mistook him for Lex although Gary was wearing his famous "I am NOT Lex Nakashima" button at the time. "All the Americans look alike," smirked Gary.

Another night at a different party I heard Rick Foss reminiscing about the beach where he spent a debauched teenager-hood and, in retrospective surprise, never landed in jail. He explained, "The beach was between Torrance and Redondo Beach but patrolled by neither because the only access was 90 steps down a cliff and there wasn't a Torrance cop who could walk 90 steps without oxygen."

HUGO CEREMONIES: American fans who arrived early for the Hugo awards were probably surprised to see Ken Konkol on stage helping start this year's event, and Ken may wish he'd been assigned a less controversial job than announcing the ban on flash photography during the ceremonies. While I welcomed the no-flash announcement and would like to see available-light photography become the standard for all events held in darkened auditoriums, the daily newzine's British editors predictably took a kill-the-messenger approach in next day's issue and panned Konkol's

announcement as brusque and unnecessary. Brit fans are wont to reject any intervention in the pleasures of a minority.

Truthfully, the no-flash policy had nothing to do with preserving the audience's night-vision. The U.S. ambassador to The Netherlands, C. Howard Wilkins, Jr., spoke at the ceremonies. The security staff swept the hall for bombs before anyone was admitted and then forbade anything that could be confused with a muzzle flash.

C. Howard Wilkins, Jr., a Kansas businessman who made his money through Pizza Hut franchises, is a leading Republican fund-raiser and past National Finance Chairman of the Republican Senate Committee from 1977-1982. Ambassador Wilkins opened the ceremonies and returned to present the Best Novel Hugo to Hyperion. Afterwards, despite carefully orchestrated plans for his departure, Wilkins dashed backstage to meet Robert Silverberg.

Wilkins, who proved to be a science fiction reader of many years' standing, astutely observed that after years of conserving the tradition of science fiction against the indifference of mundane culture "sometimes we are wary it will become too popular and the secret will get out to the whole world..."

Two other presentations preceded the Hugos. As reported last issue, First Fandom's Ray Beam wrote unhappily in Lan's Lantern 32 that the Holland Worldcon committee planned to omit the First Fandom Hall of Fame awards from the Hugo ceremonies. Beam aroused so much controversy that his awards were restored to the program.

The committee also planned to relegate the Big Heart to the

afternoon ceremony for miscellaneous awards until I persuaded Jo Thomas it would take only five minutes and most people would be happier to see it given in its traditional spot. Indeed, Forrest J Ackerman took no more than five minutes to present the Big Heart Award to Jay Kay Klein, who declared, " -- and no flash allowed, either!"

Ray Beam, explained that the First Fandom Hall of Fame awards are given to people who made a significant contribution to science fiction. Three winners were named: Robert A. Madle, Edd Cartier and Alex Schomburg. The verbose presentations took fifteen minutes, providing further ammunition for critics who consider the Hugo Awards Ceremony overlong and talky.

The Hugo Awards themselves were notable for giving Anne McCaffrey an unexpected workout. She galloped down the auditorium stairs to pick up two awards for Don Maitz. After the second she expressed the worry that Maitz wouldn't believe her when she phoned. On the other hand, when Gardner Dozois won Best Professional Editor he walked up slowly and then explained, "Twenty years ago I would have vaulted onto the stage but I'm not capable of that anymore."

Moshe Feder accepted Stu Shiffman's Best Fanartist Hugo, saying it broke Stu's record-setting string of nominations without an award. "Of course," as Effinger always says, "it's an honor just to be nominated...."

Often-nominated Robert Silverberg won the Best Novelette Hugo. It had been 37 years since at age 18 he sat in the balcony to watch the first Hugos awarded.

Later in the con, writes Evelyn C.

Leeper in The MT Void, v.9 n.14, there was a program called "How I Stopped Worrying About the Rocket" in which "[Andrew] Porter revealed some of the deep, dark secrets about the Hugos. For example, when they arrive, sans engraving, the committee finds the least pitted and scratched one and uses that for the Best Novel award. The second-best is used for Best Novella, and so on down the line -- the Best Fan Writer and Best Fan Artist gets the most pitted and scratched ones."

It's tempting to let such a great story stand uncorrected, but since Peter Weston's company took over the manufacture of the rockets they have been flawless.

DECORATED VETERANS: Long ago Jay Kay Klein ceased to be merely some fannish shutterbug crouched at the periphery of our vision during Hugo awards or guest of honor speeches. He created a visual archive of the history of science fiction fandom, and was recognized for his contributions when he was named Fan Guest of Honor of the 1974 Worldcon.

Yet it is true, as slaves traditionally whispered to triumphant Roman generals, that all glory is fleeting. At ConFiction I learned Jay Kay was still smoldering over the Noreascon 3 committee's decision to restrict him to the official photographers' seating during the 1989 Hugo ceremonies. Please understand, Jay Kay isn't upset because he actually wound up sitting far to the side of the stage with other photographers. No indeed, the very moment a Noreascon 3 official gloatingly informed him of the decision Jay Kay went and explained his predicament to master of ceremonies Fred Pohl. Then, as Fred's guest, Jay Kay was seated in the front row of the VIP section,

permitting him to roam the edge of the stage as usual. Jay Kay recalled with great pleasure how the gloating official became apoplectic when she learned how her decision had been evaded.

If it is a cliché for experienced fans to claim they never attend the program, Jay Kay attends all the programs -- long enough to photograph them. Peter Weston interrupted his narrative during "An Illustrated Tour Through SF History" to tell his friend, "Jay: you're rushing off to take pictures somewhere else; sit down and enjoy yourself!"

Jay Kay said he once wandered into a session of black Shriners who shared the hotel with a science fiction convention on some bygone weekend. Things for sale by the Shriners included costume jewelry pins to be attached to a fez identifying one as a lodge "imam" or "doorkeeper" or "past imam" or "past doorkeeper." Even though he thought this reflected a pathetic need for these impoverished folk to aggrandize themselves with meaningless bits of fame, five minutes later Jay Kay was intently explaining to me how unfortunate it is that Worldcons lack a sense of continuity about past guests of honor, and that committees ought to distribute ribbons to the appropriate people identifying them as "Past Worldcon Guest of Honor", etc.

Setting aside coincidental ironies in Jay Kay's opinions, no convention has been more generous in its distribution of ribbons than ConFiction. Two unofficial contests sprang up: to see who could acquire the most ribbons legitimately, and to see who could acquire the most ribbons, period.

For example, I was entitled to the

following ribbons: Committee (blue), Hugo Award Nominee (gray), and Programme Participant (yellow). I was explaining this to Andy Porter when he came to Programme Oops to collect his own nominee ribbon, and when Robert Silverberg overheard us and said, "For God's sake, you're grown men!" with mock exasperation.

Zaftig extrovert Alison Scott seemed to have redefined "legitimate" to mean any ribbon she could get someone to give her. Working in the Green Room she had custody of the Programme Participant ribbons but she didn't think it was sporting to take one for herself. Yet was okay to trade her pink People Mover badge for my participant ribbon, later I replaced mine from her stock. She had to work harder for her Hugo nominee ribbon; Jo Thomas suggested that kissing every guy in Programme Oops would help, and Jo was right.

Tim Illingsworth, another British conrunner, held an early lead in the legitimate ribbon contest until that proved too tame. Getting them any-which-way, Illingsworth kept the lead until Sunday night, when a fan wearing a sandwich-board full of fabricated ribbons beat him out.

ConFiction's "Trouble-Shooters" had red-and-white vertical-striped ribbons. Among the first ersatz staff ribbons were reproduced by gophers who painted horizontal red stripes onto their white "gopher" ribbons and labeled themselves "Trouble-Makers."

The ribbon economy was experiencing runaway inflation by Sunday morning. A femmefan trying to expand her ribbon collection spotted Seth Breidbart, wearing a Hugo nominee ribbon, at breakfast with Neil Rest, Saul Jaffe and the remnants of the gopher thank-you party. When the femmefan asked Breidbart how she

could get one, Jaffe reached into his pocket and produced a roll of Hugo nominee ribbons rubber-banded together like \$100 bills.

Listening to Neil Rest try to negotiate for more than a hearty handshake in exchange for the ribbon, Saul wondered aloud, "Now if she could actually get a Hugo..." I replied, "Nobody wants those, they just want the ribbon." Hearing Neil Rest unctuously telling the femmefan, "Now if you can't trust your friends..." Greg Bear, at the next table, nearly choked on his Muesli.

In the Bel Air hotel lobby on Monday night, Sasha Miller saw a sleepy-looking person who had covered his vest with ribbons, probably having managed to get hold of all except the unique "Chairman" ribbon. He had ruled diagonal black stripes onto a peach-colored ribbon and labeled it "anti-ribbon: cancels one ribbon of your choice."

HARRY HARRISON GUEST OF HONOR SPEECH:
The main auditorium was in use for masquerade rehearsal when the word went out that it needed to be reset for Harry Harrison's speech. Kees Van Toorn, John Stewart of Con operations, and four others hurried to handle the crisis. When it had been sorted out the "reset" consisted of moving four chairs on stage. Harrison sat in one while Dr. Leon Stover introduced him. Maybe John Stewart figured that with four chairs Harrison could stretch out and take a nap during Stover's introduction as so many others wished they could have done.

Harrison's pet academic, Stover, gave a banal introduction, beginning with his overblown description of Harrison's place as the "final great SF writer fostered by Astounding" and

ending with Stover's 34-year ownership of Harrison's old toaster.

Harrison himself lightheartedly remarked about the appreciation he felt for being selected as guest of honor. "I should really leave the podium now because Leon said everything I wanted to say anyway."

Instead he launched into a pro-forma autobiography. His irreverent dismissal of his World War II experience as learning to "curse, drink and to chase girls" stood in a tepid contrast to Joe Haldeman's impassioned memories of Vietnam. Harrison talked about New York fandom after the war, his experiences with Campbell, and other familiar stories.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE ART SHOW: Running a Worldcon definitely gets in the way of attending it. I never got to the Art Show or the Masquerade, but others did.

Hugo-nominated fanwriter Evelyn C. Leeper wrote in The MT Void, v.9n.13, "I got to the Art Show twice (once in advance of its real opening as a program participant, and once during the convention.) It was small, not surprisingly, but it did have a nice assortment of artwork -- not the same stuff one sees over and over at conventions in the United States. For example, Juraj Maxon from Czechoslovakia displayed some extremely elaborate pen-and-ink works ("Eskulap" was particularly notable) and Lies Jonkers from The Netherlands had some beautiful alien landscapes (including "Kakuheiki", my favorite.) The three-dimensional category suffered somewhat, with a much smaller percentage of the art show than usual. Prices were high and many items not for sale, but others were affordable. Of course transporting them was impossible, so I guess you can't win. The room was big enough

that it was not at all crowded and viewing the pieces was not the major effort it sometimes is in fuller shows."

SPOTLIGHT ON THE MASQUERADE:

J. R. Madden wrote in last December's SF Chronicle, "Sunday was the day for the Masquerade. However, early in the convention the call went out through the newsletter for participants to sign up; there were only a few costumers who pre-registered. When the event took place only 20-25 entries paraded across the stage. Apparently, costuming does not have a large number of practitioners is Europe and the U.S. costumers, spending so much on their outfits, could not afford the trip. There were also problems with customs which may have dissuaded many from attending. There were no entries in the 'masters' category this year, for instance.During an intermission after the short display of costumes, the audience was treated to a 'fashion show' hosted by a local group which evident sponsored a bondage magazine with lots of photos of women wearing rubber and latex outfits, copies of which were sold to interested fans until the end of the evening."

PROGRAMME OOPS REDUX: Hard at work on Sunday afternoon, we were forced to abandon the effort to move John Brunner's poetry reading from a room labeled as a "multiverse workshop."

Although Program Oops was given dozens of problems to solve during ConFiction, many of them seemed to involve the same five people. Brunner was one. After he returned from the room full of people expecting him to be Michael Moorcock, Sara Paul calmed John by offering him pate and crackers. He repaid the hospitality with a nonstop flow of wisdom rivalling that of Lazarus Long, for

example, "Do not under any circumstances try to clean your teeth with retsina. I learned that in 1960."

Another "regular" was earnest and charming Chris O'Kane, who proved again you can't tell a book by its cover. O'Kane modestly proposed to have his slide show "The Face of Mars" rescheduled to a time earlier than Monday after he decided not to stay to the end of ConFiction.

Of course we in "Programme Oops" lived for the chance to cancel and rearrange items, to make a great show of studying the room assignment grid for vacancies then contemplating whether enough time remained to get the change into the daily newzine or if we must send large, inebriated fans to shout the tidings from the central staircase.

Theo Hanou and I promptly went to work accommodating his schedule, never weighing the value of his program against the general inconvenience. In fact "The Face of Mars" turned out to be a worthless slide show of tabloid newspaper clippings claiming that photos of Martian rocks showed alien faces and artifacts.

Seeing an hour of slack time at 12:00 in the Rembrandtzaal after the slide show of Forry Ackerman's collection, we installed O'Kane's program there, congratulating ourselves that even the projector and screen were already in place. We dispatched fans to paper the convention with signs announcing the change.

Naturally this plan withered upon its first exposure to reality. The "25th Anniversary of Dutch Fandom" celebration which preceded Ackerman overran its time slot. What's worse, we learned this when someone

announced over the public address system of the Congress Centre that Ackerman would start at 12:30. This announcement was extraordinary a previously unsuspected public address system was used to make it. When we tried to get access to the PA to get us out of our jam Jo was told only ConFiction chairman Kees Van Toorn could authorize announcements over the PA system.

We scrambled and found another vacant function room. Tech Ops did a heroic job providing a slide projector on a moment's notice, and the gophers who had just posted signs about O'Kane's program were sent back, groaning, to retrieve their signs and change all the information. Miraculously, O'Kane still drew an audience of 20.

After all the labor on his behalf, O'Kane proved Robert Heinlein's view that "Gratitude is not a human emotion" by homesteading the room past 1:00 PM. Seventy-five fans and panelists, including Jo Fletcher and John M. Ford, were forced to wait in the hall while I pressed him to interrupt his endless slides of National Enquirer covers devoted to vague faces and building-shaped rectangles allegedly photographed during overflights of the Martian surface.

When Fletcher's panel, "How to Invent a Religion", finally convened in that small room it was mobbed. Rick Foss decided, "The density of crowding people are willing to accept at a program they want to see exceeds that of a Japanese commuter train. It's like a sauna in there, without the oxygen level."

A FAREWELL TO ARMS: Like O'Kane, my travel plans forced me to miss Monday's program. I spent Sunday evening winding up the day's chores in Program Oops as Jo Thomas went off

to handle the Masquerade.

Hugo-winner Dave Langford came by and shared how distressed he felt to learn that he had now won more Hugos than Robert Heinlein: Heinlein can't fight back. It was okay that he had won more Hugos than L. Ron Hubbard, because Hubbard still can...

John Betancourt walked in with a plaque labeled American Discount Book Centers Award, given to David Eddings as the best selling sf-fantasy author from 1972-1990 in their stories. Sara Paul asked John if he liked Eddings' fiction. John said he can't stand it. "So why did they ask you to receive his award?" asked Sara. John guessed, "I was the only person in the building wearing a tie."

On Monday morning I rediscovered the world beyond the door of the Bel Air. It was a world of pastures bisected by canals and railroad tracks connecting mundane Dutch towns to Schipol Airport. Though other fans would follow this route to Paris, Copenhagen and London, I had only the time and money to see ConFiction, and even so I was content to have been here.



